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The Duty of Obedience to Governors.

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the Assizes

Held at *Croydon*, in the County of
Surry, Mar. 15. 172 $\frac{1}{2}$

Before the Right Honourable the
Lord Chief Justice *Pratt*,
And the Honourable
Mr. Justice *Powis*.

By RICHARD IBBETSON, D.D. Rector
of *Lambeth*, and Chaplain to His Grace the
— Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*.

*Publiſh'd at the Request of the High Sheriff, and the
Gentlemen of the Grand Jury.*

L O N D O N :

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To the Worshipful
Peter Theobald Esq;
High Sheriff of the County of
S U R R Y,

The Right Honourable
CHARLES, Lord Baltimore.

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This Sermon, Publish'd at their Request,
is most Humbly Dedicated.





The Duty of Obedience to Governors.

R o m xiii. 4.

*For he is the Minister of God to
thee for Good ---*



THE Arguments by which St. Paul enforces Obedience to the Civil Magistrate, are these Two imply'd in my Text:

- I. Because He is the Minister of God.
- II. Because He is the Minister of God to us for Good.

The former Argument we find more fully expressed, ver. 1. *Let every Soul be subject to the Higher Powers. For there is no Power but of God.*
The

The Powers that be are Ordain'd of God. The latter we have, v. 3. *For Rulers are not a Terror to Good Works, but to the Evil.* From whence the Apostle infers, ver. 5. *Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience sake:* that is, not only to escape the Wrath of Man, the Penalties of Human Laws, but in compliance with the plainest Dictates of Reason and Conscience, which teach the Duty of Obedience to Governors, under the pain, not only of displeasing Man, but God, whose Will is opposed by an Opposition to Civil Government.

It shall be the Business of the following Discourse, to insist upon these two Arguments for Obedience to Governors, and to make such an Application of them as may tend to enforce this Duty, and to put Men in mind, as the same Apostle directs in another Place, *to be subject to Principalities and Powers, and to obey Magistrates.* And,

I. *The Civil Magistrate is the Minister of God;* or, in other Words, the *Civil Government*, in each Nation, in whatever Hands it be placed, or upon what Plan soever establish'd, is the Ordinance of God to those that live under it, and not to be disturbed or opposed by private Persons, in order to introduce any new Schemes of their own, however in Appearance, plausible or useful.

The Apostle says, that *The Powers that be are ordain'd of God.* The Powers that were at that Time, and in that Place, to which this Epistle was sent, were the *Roman Emperors.* And if we consider, either the way they at first came by their Power,

Power, or their manner of exercising it, we cannot suppose that *St. Paul* design'd to prefer this to all other Governments, or that if he had liv'd under any other Government, he wou'd not equally have pressed Obedience to it, as he did to this. His Opinion plainly was, that all Government is the Ordinance of God; because Obedience to Civil Government is ty'd upon us by the Laws of God, tho' the Designation of the Persons to govern, as well the different Forms of Government, may be owing to Human Laws and Constitutions.

The Apostle we find preaches Obedience to the Government, as he found it at that time settled, without examining how it had stood before. And by his Example we may spare ourselves the Trouble of all those Enquiries, with which Men have wearied themselves to no Purpose about the Original of Government, as being of no moment to know, (if it cou'd certainly be discover'd, as for want of History it cannot,) in what particular manner all Governments in the World were at first formed. Whether absolute Monarchs grew up by Degrees out of Fathers of Families, or whether these sort of Governments were framed by the Concurrence of different Persons, who, by common Agreement put themselves under the Protection of one, whose Age gave him the greatest Authority, or whose Courage, or Justice, Wisdom and Experience, promis'd them the greatest Happiness and Safety under his Government? Whether popular or mixed Governments were owing at first to the Favour of Princes, who were willing to part with the whole, or any Share of their Power, in order to place it in such Hands as they judg'd to be most for the Common

mon Advantage; or, Whether they were originally instituted, or afterwards introduced by those, who foreseeing by their Prudence, or taught by Experience, that unlimited Power was apt to corrupt even good Men, hoped by dividing it among several Persons, to guard as far as possible against the Abuse of it. In short, whether to these, or the like Causes and Motives any form of Government is owing, it all comes to the same thing, and by the Apostle's Rule, those to whom

ver. 6, 7. Men pay *Tribute*, and from whom they receive Protection; the Person, or Persons, in whom the Laws of each Country have plac'd the Supreme Power, are there the *Ministers* of God, whom Men are to obey not only for *Wrath*, but also for *Conscience* sake.

God indeed does not now immediately interpose as he did amongst the *Jews* in setting up, or removing particular Persons or Forms of Government. But yet in all Nations the *Civil Magistrate* may be called the *Minister*, and *Civil Government* the *Ordinance of God*, because Obedience to it is the Dictate of the *Law of Nature*, which is the

Rom. 2. 15. *Law of God* written in Mens Hearts.

And besides, as St. Peter informs us, *Governors*

I Pet. 2. 14. *being sent by God for the Punishment of evil doers, and the praise of them that do well*; and consequently it being one part of the Duty of the Civil Magistrate to maintain the Honour of God, by suppressing Wickedness and Vice, and encouraging Religion and Vertue, he may upon this Account be properly called the *Minister of God*, as St. Paul explains himself in the Words following my Text,

ver. 4. *For he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the*
Mi-

Minister of God, a Revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.

When therefore the Apostle says, that the Civil Magistrate *is the Minister*, and Civil Government *the Ordinance of God*, he does not, and indeed cannot by this mean to assert, what was not in his Days true, that any one Person, or Family, or Form of Government was immediately appointed, or expressly approv'd of by God, exclusively of all others: but that it was the Will of God that every one should obey the Laws, and reverence the Persons of those Governors, under which he liv'd: and not raise Commotions and Disturbances upon pretence, that no Government was lawful, or, that the particular Government of his Country was either not agreeable to the Will of God, or not suited to promote the Good of the Community.

These were the very Principles that amongst different sorts of Persons prevail'd about that time, and against which it is not unreasonable to think *St. Paul's* Positions were directed, and which might occasion those frequent Exhortations to Obedience, and those sharp Reproofs of Sedition we meet with, both in him and the rest of the Apostles *.

* *Quod quidem Præceptum, & hic & ibi [viz. Rom. xiii. i.] propterea puto Editum, quia Juda Galilæi per illud tempus dogma adhuc vige-
bat, & habebat plurimos sectatores. Hieron. in Tit. iii. i.*

For the first of these Errors was that of *Judas Galileus*, and his Followers, who as † *Josephus* tells us, taught the Notion of such an unbounded Liberty as left Men free from Obedience to any Prince or Governor, but God alone. And therefore, it is no wonder that these Opinions were attended with such Practices as we find in * the aforementioned Historian, agreeably to what we have in the *Acts of the Apostles* about this *Judas*, who, *Acts v. 37.* as it is there said, *rose up in the Days of the Taxing, and drew away much People after him.*

The second Mistake I mention'd, was || that of the *Pharisees*, which was that Sect of the *Jews*, who valu'd themselves the most upon the exact Knowledge of, and strict Adherence to their Law. But their aiming at a literal Obedience, rather than such as was agreeable to the Spirit and Meaning of it, occasion'd their running into many Mistakes, and this among the rest (if their Scruples were real, and not as the Historian gives us some reason to suspect, owing to Political Views) that they seem'd to think themselves excused from

† Τῇ δ' ἐξέτασιν τῶν φιλοσοφῶν ὁ Γαλιλαῖος Ἰούδας ἡγεμὼν κατέστη, ἃ μὲν λοιπὰ πάντα γνώμη τῶν φαρισαίων ομολογῶσι, δυσκίνητος δὲ τῷ ἐλευθέρῳ ἔρως ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς μόνον ἡγεμόνα καὶ δεσπότην τὸν θεὸν ὑπεληφῶσι. θανάτων τε ἰδέας ὑπομένειν· ἐν ολίγῳ τίθενται· ὡς περὶ τῆ μηδένα ἀνθρώπων περισσεύειν δεσπότην. *Joseph. Antiqu. lib. xviii. c. 2. vid. & Hieron. in Tit. iii. 1.*

* Ἰούδας δὲ Γαυλανίης ἀνὴρ· Σάδδουκον φαρισαῖον περιλαμβανόμενος ἠπαύειτο ἐπὶ ἀποστάσει, τήν τε ἀποσίμωσιν ἐδίδεν ἄλλο ἢ ἀντικρυς δευλίαν ἐπιφέρειν λέγοντες. *Joseph. Antiqu. l. xviii. c. 1.*

|| *Joseph. Antiqu. l. xvii. c. 3. vid. etiam Hieron. in Tit. iii. 1.*

Obedience

Obedience to any Government, which was not fram'd upon their Model: and upon this Pretence, it is probable, * they refused to take an Oath to *Cæsar* * *Joseph.* and *Herod*, tho' the rest of the Nation had done it; *Ant. l. 17.* as if they had been under an † Obligation to stick *c. 2.* to the Rules of their Law, when the Change *† vid. Deut. 17. 15.* of their Circumstances had made it impossible. *& Grotium in locum.*

However, the Generality of the *Jews* were so far influenc'd by their Authority, that notwithstanding the Oath they had taken, yet they were so uneasy under the *Roman* Government that they obey'd rather for *Wrath*, than for *Conscience* sake, and watched every Opportunity to raise Tumults and Seditions in order to shake off the Yoke, which generally ended to their own Disadvantage, and at last in the utter Ruin of their City and Government.

And as the first Christians were many of them *Jews* originally, it is not impossible that some of them might be tinctur'd with these Opinions, * which might be further improv'd by false Notions of that *Liberty* with which *Christ* had made *John 8. 36.* them free. Whether these, or the like Mistakes *Gal. 5. 1.* were the Occasion of it, it is certain we find some, who, at least had been Christians, describ'd by *St. Peter* and *St. Jude*, as *Presumptuous* and *Selfwilled*, *2. Pet. 2.* who despised Dominion, and spake evil of Dignities, *Jude 8.* and are censured as *Murmurers* and *Complainers*, *ver. 16.*

* *Hac Causa adversus illos prolata est, qui se putabant ita habere Libertatem Christianam, ut aut nulli honorem deberent, aut tributa dependere.* Commentar. in Rom. xiii. 1. *Hieronym.* adscript.

walking after their own Lusts, and their mouth spake great swelling words: and whilst they promised others Liberty, they themselves were the Servants of Corruption.

² Pet. 2.
^{19.}

And besides these sort of Principles at this time common among the *Jews*, it is not improbable that St. Paul, in an Epistle written to the Christians at Rome, might have an Eye to the State of Affairs there, where the Love of their popular Government not yet quite worn out, produced many Conspiracies against the *Powers in being*, and frequent Attempts to restore the Commonwealth for a long time after the Government of the Emperors had been fully settled.

In Opposition therefore to such Principles and Practices, the Apostle directs the Christians to live peaceably under that Government, where Providence had placed them, and not to be drawn aside from their Duty, either by those among the *Romans*, who were Enemies to all Governments, but that of a Commonwealth; or, on the other side, by the *Jews*, who pleaded that their Government alone was the *Ordinance of God*. That whatever Preference the *First* might give to their former Government, which perhaps they had read the Praises of in their Historians or Orators, it was not the Business of private Persons to attempt the introducing *New*, or *Old* Forms of Government, but to obey the *Present*. That the *Second* were in a great Mistake to imagin, that the Governors in other Nations were not the *Ministers of God*, as well as theirs;

theirs ; or, that they were not obliged to pay that Obedience to the *Romans*, which they had agreed and sworn to, because they had formerly liv'd under a different Form of Government under Kings appointed by God, or constituted according to the Law of *Moses*. That in short the *Roman Emperor* was *the Minister of God*, because by the Law of God and Nature, Obedience was as much due to him, as to the Supreme Power in any other Nation : That as they enjoy'd the Benefit and Protection of his Government, it was their Duty to live peaceably under it, and readily to contribute to its Support and Defence, as it is *ver. 6.* For *for this Cause pay you tribute also ; for they are God's Ministers attending continually upon this very thing.* And therefore, even those, who amongst the *Jews* had refused to give the Government this Security of an Oath, yet were not by this excused from their Obedience to it, because they found Safety to their Persons and Properties under the Protection of its Laws. And it is a very unjust, as well as dishonourable Way of requiting such Benefits, to plot and contrive the Ruin of that Government to which they are owing. Which brings me to the next Argument the Apostle urges for Obedience to the Civil Magistrate ; because,

II. He is the Minister of God to us for Good. I need not enlarge upon all the particular Advantages Men receive from Civil Government ; The Happiness Men enjoy under this, cannot more fully appear than from a View of the Misery and Confusion which would arise from the want of it. With-

Without this, Mens Condition wou'd be worse, even than that of wild Beasts, as much as they exceed them in the Capacities of doing Mischief, when once the superior Abilities God hath given them are employ'd to wrong Ends and Uses. In the State of Nature, (for want of Government, for the Punishment of Evil-doers) Men's Lives and Properties wou'd be perpetually expos'd, whilst all were left at Liberty to gratify their Desires, and pursue their Resentments at the Expence of those, who had not strength to oppose them. And, notwithstanding the Principles of Peace, and Kindness, and mutual Love, which are in some measure planted in all Mens Breasts, without the Terror of humane Penalties to restrain the Unruliness of Mens Passions, the World wou'd be in a State of War. And in the midst of such Disorders, every Man wou'd be so taken up in providing for his own Security, that he cou'd have no leisure to cultivate any of those Arts by which Life is made more easy and agreeable: and in such a State they must have wanted not only the Protection of the Laws, but all those useful Inventions, which were the Result of Mens united Wits and Endeavours, and which supply them with all the Conveniences, as well as Necessaries of Life. 'Twas for this Reason that such Honours were paid by all civiliz'd Nations to the first Founders of their Government, whom they thought it was ungrateful to forget, whilst they enjoy'd the Benefit of their Care and Policy in good and wholesome Laws; and therefore, the *Roman* Orator, tho' himself a great Admirer, as well as Master of the

the *Greek* Philosophy, does not scruple to prefer the Laws of his Country to the Writings of all the Philosophers. * "Because, as he observes, *Cicer. de Orat. l. 1. c. 43, 44.*

"Men may the most easily learn from them the Difference there is between Vertue and Vice, whilst the one meets with its just Reward in Honour and Advancement, and the other in Punishment and Infamy. And, as he goes on, the Laws whilst they speak with such Plainness and Authority, will teach those, who would not be persuaded by the Reasoning of Philosophers, to curb their Passions, and restrain their Desires, and to forbear breaking in upon the Properties and Possessions of other Men." Such a good Influence Civil Government, and the due Execution of the Laws was thought by great and wise Men, as well as found by Experience, to have upon the Happiness of Mankind. And to this Purpose, some of the Fathers, and particularly *St. Chrysostom*, observe upon this Passage of *St. Paul*, *There is no Power but of God, the Powers that be are ordain'd of God.*

"Not, says he, that every Prince, or Governor *Chrysost. in loc.*

"is immediately appointed by God. The Apostle doth not speak about particular Governors, but about Government in general: That there should be such a thing as Civil Government, that some should command, and others obey, is so suited to the Circumstances of Mankind, and so necessary to preserve Peace and Order, and prevent Confusion, that it ought to pass for a Work of the Divine Wisdom.

And

And besides Mens Civil Interests, those of Religion too may receive great Advantages from Civil Government.

It cou'd not indeed be expected that those whom *St. Paul* here directs Obedience to be paid to, being Heathens, should employ any of the Opportunities they had to promote Christianity; who, on the contrary, frequently used their Power to suppress it. And the many Instances there are, and have been in the World, where a false or very corrupt Religion hath been supported and countenanced by the Civil Power, whilst the true one hath been discourag'd and persecuted, have been used as Arguments to exclude Civil Governors from any Concern in the Affairs of Religion. But there is certainly no Consequence in this way of reasoning; for if the Abuse of Power was allowed to be a good Argument against the Power itself, the Objection wou'd be of equal Force to take away from Governors all Power in Civil, as well as in Religious Matters, unless it cou'd be pretended, that tho' Governors have misemployed their Power in one Case, yet they never did in the other.

But without entering into all the Particulars of this Dispute, which demands a Discourse by it self fully to state and examin, I shall only observe in general, that Religion being universally allow'd even by * the Heathens, nay, even by its Enemies, to be the greatest Security of Government, and the strongest Tye of all Humane Society, the Care of
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* *Vid. Cic.*
De nat.
Deor. l. 1.
c. 2.

it naturally falls to those Persons, who have the Care of the Publick Welfare, from whom it seems in Justice to demand Countenance for the Service it does to Civil Government. The wise Man observes, *that Righteousness exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a Reproach to any People.* Prov. xiv. 34. The more the Sense of Religion prevails in any Nation, the more it generally prospers, as well from the natural Tendency of Religion and Vertue to promote publick Peace and Happiness, as from the Blessing of God, who hath declared, that *Those who honour him, he will honour, but those who despise him shall be lightly esteem'd.* Sam. 2. 30. And therefore, whilst the Ministers of the Gospel preach up the great Duties of Christianity, whilst they recommend Temperance, and Justice, and Charity, and other Vertues, and that from the strongest Motives, and weightiest Considerations, the Civil Magistrate may well look upon them, as concurring in the same Design with himself; as adding Weight to his Laws, and Strength to his Government; and consequently as such, who are intitled to a publick Support and Encouragement, which yet, if he hath nothing to do with the Business of Religion, he hath no Authority to afford them, or maintain them in.

But having not at present time to insist longer upon this Subject, I proceed, as I propos'd, in the next Place, to make such an Application of what hath been said, as may enforce this Duty of Obedience to Governors, and *put Men in mind to be*
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subject to Principalities and Powers, and to obey Magistrates.

Since therefore the Civil Magistrate *is the Minister of God to us for Good*, both Religion and Reason, both our Duty and our Interest, engage us to maintain a due Reverence to his Person, and a just Regard to his Authority. We are not to look upon Obedience as an arbitrary Thing, which we may pay, or refuse at Pleasure, or to think our selves at Liberty to traduce and vilify the Persons, or Actions of our Governors, as our Humours, or Interests, or Resentments lead us. Those in Authority have a Right to the Obedience and Assistance of their Inferiors, who, as they reap the Benefits of their Government, ought to contribute all they can to make their Cares for the publick Good the most easy and successful. And *this is a Duty Men are often to be put in mind of*, as the Apostle directs, because of themselves they are many times so insensible of the Blessings they enjoy under a settled Government, and of the Kindness of Providence in affording them such a Security to their Persons, and Properties, that they are more apt to complain of the Burden, than to acknowledge the Benefit; and to think those Laws, which are necessary for their Safety, an undue Restraint of their Liberty. And besides, the Generality of Men being naturally ready to look with Envy upon the Persons, and Jealousy upon the Designs of their Governours, are too easily influenc'd by the Language of those, who make it their Business to complain of Grievances,
and

and lament public Mismanagements. But whatever Praise those may deserve, who are forward in opposing Evil Counsels, and watchful against all Encroachments upon their Liberties, yet this Justice is due to Governors, as well as to private Persons, that no Reports to their Disadvantage shou'd be believ'd upon the bare Word of their professed Enemies. And indeed, considering the many and great Difficulties which necessarily attend and perplex all public Proceedings, the several unforeseen Accidents, which frequently defeat, or disconcert the wisest Counsels, Men shou'd be ready to make at least the same Allowances, even for the real Mistakes of their Governors, which they wou'd expect to find for their own; and not think every thing ill design'd, which hath bad Success. And therefore, tho' no Man ought to be too hastily censured, who, in a proper Manner expresses his Dislike of, or uses that Power, which his Station gives him to oppose such Measures, as appear to him prejudicial to the Community: Yet when things have been settled by a proper Authority, and determin'd by those, whose Judgments are to govern in Public Affairs, to make Appeals to the People in virulent Invectives against, and malicious Aspersions of Superiors, (in which generally little Regard is had to Truth in representing either Facts, or Designs) as it is contrary to the Rules of our Religion, so it is the Method of those who aim more at subverting Government, than redressing Grievances.

Let us therefore duly reflect upon this Position of the Apostle, that Governors are the *Ministers of God to us for Good*, and that to These under God we owe the Security both of our Persons and Properties, and all other Enjoyments. They, who are sensible of these Advantages, will see no Hardships in Obedience, equal to the Fears and Mischiefs which arise in a State of Anarchy, from the Passions and Wickedness of Men, under the Controul of no Law, and will therefore think the Restraints of Government an Improvement, not an Infringement of their Liberty.

And indeed, we of this Kingdom may justly applaud our own Happiness in this Particular, and whether we consider the Condition of other Nations abroad, or look back upon our former Fears and Apprehensions at home, we have all the Reason imaginable to be thankful to Providence, both for our Government and Governors.

Our Civil Government is so contriv'd as to preserve a due Balance between the Power of the Prince, and the Liberties of the People; and our Religion, which, for its greater Security, is made Part of our Constitution, is that which we find in the Holy Scriptures, and the Primitive Writers.

At the Head of this Constitution, by the Blessing of God, we have a Prince, as tender of his
Subjects

Subjects Rights, as of his own Prerogative, under whom our Liberties are safe, not so much from the Goodness of our Laws, as from his natural Love of Justice, by which his Subjects abroad, even under Absolute Power, enjoy all the Happiness of a free People.

And as our Civil Rights have nothing to fear under such a Prince, so our Church can never be more secure than under that Family, who were brought up in a Religion contained in that very * Confession of Faith, which hath been always much esteem'd by the most Learned of our Divines, and which the Compilers of our Articles made great Use of, and had a particular Regard to. So that what is often the greatest Hindrance to Truth, here contributes to promote it; and a Religion, which hath nothing to fear so much as not being thoroughly understood, lies under no Disadvantages from the Prejudices of our Governors, who yet have Penetration and good Sense sufficient to overcome the greatest.

Having therefore so much Reason to look upon the Settlement of the present Royal Family amongst

* The Confession of *Ausburgh*, of which the Learned Bishop Bull gives this Character. *Augustanam Confessionem, utpote omnium Reformatarum nobilissimam atque antiquissimam, ita, tum hic, tum alibi secuti sunt Ecclesia nostra Proceres, ut qui istam ignorat, is articulorum nostrorum mentem ac sententiam vix recte Percepturus sit.* Harm. Apost. p. 110. Col. 2. And the just Esteem Archbishop Laud had for the Lutheran Churches, may be seen in the *History of his Troubles*, &c. p. 141.

us, as an Argument of the Kindness of Providence to these Nations, we may justly think any Attempt against it, not only a Sin against the Doctrines of Christianity, and the Commands of the Apostle, but against true Wisdom and good Policy; and cannot but see the folly of being seduc'd from our Allegiance by the Arts of those, who, perhaps may enflame Mens Passions, by representing to them the Weight of those Grievances, which they are ready enough to complain of, whether they feel them or no; but can never be able to convince their Reason, that the Subversion of Government is a likely Way to secure either their Liberties, or their Properties.

Let us therefore religiously observe the Advice
Prov. xxiv. 21. of the wisest Prince that ever reign'd. *My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to Change: for their Calamity shall come suddenly, and who knoweth the Ruin of them both.* And to this we may add the
Rom. xiii. 1. Command of the Apostle, *Let every Soul be subject to the higher Powers; for there is no Power but of God: the Powers that be are ordain'd of God.*
ver. 7. *Render therefore to all their Dues, Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Custom to whom Custom, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour.*

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